Roles, Missions, and JTFs:
Unintended Consequences

By STEVEN L. CANBY

Order a naval rating *to "secure the house" and he'll enter it, close all doors and windows, and probably throw a line over the roof and lash it down.*

Order an infantryman *to "secure the house" and he'll enter it, shoot anything that moves, and then probably dig a trench about it.*

Order an airman *to "secure the house" and he'll stroll down to the local estate agent and take out a 7-year lease on it.*

—A British military adage

The challenge facing the American military is to sustain the size and readiness of its forces while reducing its budget. Greater jointness is needed; but it will not resolve or significantly affect this challenge. Nor is there a mother lode in realigning roles and missions. Jointness seeks to gain synergism and avoid parochialism by command arrangements and broader multiservice training. It unfortunately institutionalizes the presumption that joint operations are preferable to single-service operations even when jointness complicates an operation that should be swift, small, and discrete. Current initiatives to realign roles and missions simply replow the same old fields in the same old way. The variables today are political: the spotlight shining on the current effort will give greater weight to its conclusions, while the aura of jointness may diffuse those variables by evoking multiservice complementarity (static synergy) and assistance (enabling). Savings will accrue, though mainly at the expense of force structure and loss of service identity in support functions.

A qualitative approach is needed to maintain the integrity of the force, reach higher levels of readiness and training, and lower costs. That approach is maneuver warfare, as conceptualized in a theory which displays its organizational, manpower, and training implications. Such issues must be addressed together with vexing problems like burdensharing, reconstitution, and acquisition.

The Armed Forces are being buffeted by uncertain strategic bearings and budgetary issues. The U.S. military is designed to fight similarly organized militaries that threaten our vital interests, while the demands actually being placed on them come from less threatening rogue states and peace operations, the latter often resembling acute cases of the domestic missions of the National Guard. In the main, change in the military has meant downsizing to capture a much sought peace dividend. Forces are shrinking, arguably to a level too small to support an articulated strategy of meeting two nearly simultaneous major regional contingencies.

Congress, particularly the House Armed Services Committee, would reduce budgets more. Because it sees budgets and forces as irrevocably linked and virtually synonymous, it is pressing for a major realignment of roles and missions to reduce what it sees as waste from duplication and overlap. Another thrust is consolidating support functions. The agenda thus calls for further drawdowns in wings, ships, and divisions and still greater defense-wide provision of common training and logistical support.

The Joint Staff and U.S. Atlantic Command (ACOM), which presides over most CONUS-based forces, are institutionalizing joint (multiservice) exercises and adaptive joint forces packages to stretch productivity, substitute home-based force projection for forward basing, and rectify the long-standing embarrassment of a lack in interservice cooperation. They are also seeking to deflect the impact of realignment with themes of multiservice synergy and enabling. The Armed Forces should have unity of effort and be interoperable and mutually supporting. Ironically, successive Secretaries of Defense have preached multinational interoperability to our NATO allies but have never achieved multiservice interoperability at home.

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It is another thing, however, to view units nominally similar and functionally interoperable, such as wings and divisions, as composed of interchangeable components and to divide and group their disparate parts in task forces and expect them to function as intricately as single-service units (especially if single-service units suitable for a mission already exist). For large and medium-sized contingencies, there is a need for an overarching joint command framework (that is, CINCs and joint commands) to fit in and coordinate service contributions; but there is little need for component packaging. For small contingencies, especially those of a *coup de main* nature, jointness itself may not be operationally desirable and should be held to a minimum.[1]

The nature of the new world order and increasing dominance of fire mean more operations should be conducted as *coups de main*. The possibilities are so diverse that it is not practical to anticipate and organize preexisting adaptive joint forces packages truly tailored for each variation. Instead one must rely on officers attuned to mission orders and highly trained in specialized arms along with subordinate units cobbled together on an ad hoc basis. This is necessary since reaction time is normally short and the increased (Clausewitzian) friction inherent in jointness multiplies the risks of another Desert One debacle (a case where what is known in today's parlance as an adaptive joint force package, though well-rehearsed, fractured under stress along cultural lines).

Intricate operations such as Desert One are facilitated by reducing the friction of jointness through joint culture. On the other hand, a contingency need not be joint and a joint force can be built sequentially rather than by a "mix-master" of "oars in the water."[2] And of course for mainline operations requiring major forces, service cultures offer an indispensable insight into the way each service operates in its unique land, sea, or air environment. Suppression of service cultures is only acceptable, and perhaps even mandatory, for the few units which must act in multiservice unison in chaotic environments. But requirements for those few should not be extended to the entire force. As Bernard Trainor has warned, service cultures are intangibles to be exploited, not suppressed.[3] Nonetheless, procedures and vocabularies (for instance, a term like *secure*) should be standardized to avoid confusion and facilitate interoperability.

Suppressing service cultures may well induce a conformity which could lead to "a military that is inflexible, uncreative, and most importantly predictable."[4] That contention may be difficult to prove but it is suggested from observing large multiservice and multinational staffs. It is true that suppressing cultures undercuts service identities and the morale benefits which accrue from it, and countervails the aim of joint packaging, namely, orchestrating diverse capabilities from within each service and thereby shielding them from the realignment ax. Knee jerk suppression of service cultures and uniqueness inadvertently reduces the essence of combined arms—its diversity—to a new homogeneity already manifest in the American military, that is, generalized branch arms and all-purpose units putatively suitable for all occasions and therefore less than optimal for each.

The unintended consequences of unbounded jointness may be a force that is less effective, more costly, and not fully capable

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Combat Camera Imagery (C.H. Rudisill)

Walking the wire at Camp Able Sentry.

of intimate joint operations even if inflexibility and predictability are not problems. A realignment of roles and missions compounds these negatives. For example, realignment has its eye on eliminating one or more of the four service air forces on the grounds of efficiency. Marine aviation is a likely candidate. This may result in trading an intimately integrated joint team for an uncertain one whose jointness may be potent but definitely not intimate and agile.

How Much Jointness?

No one opposes jointness in principle. The issue is its meaning. Jointness must balance the reduction of friction among the services against negatives like layering command arrangements and costly field exercises. Only a fraction of officers need be cross-trained in service cultures and languages. It may also be desirable for standing joint commands to be composed of augmentation cells with predesignated augmentees and command post exercises on medium-sized operations—as smaller, intimate joint operations are based upon service headquarters around which predesignated specialized augmentations from other services rapidly form. Equality among services should not be a driving concern.

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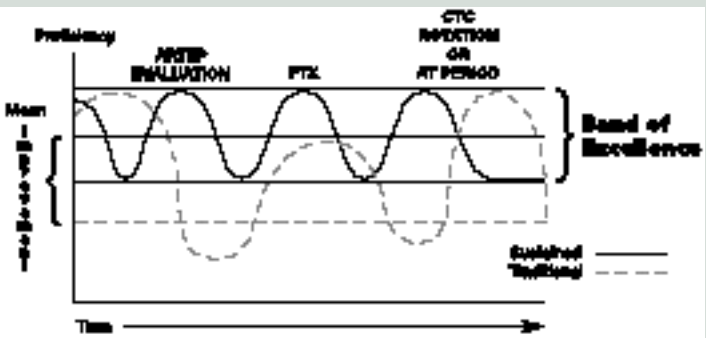
Jointness is demanding. But fortunately much can be resolved by unity of command and predesigned interoperability like compatible communications and refueling. Also, except for Army ground forces and Air Force tactical aviation, demand for intimate interfacing is surprisingly small. It can be limited to interfacing special capabilities that one service has and another finds too small or episodic in demand to duplicate, and by focusing on linkages like fire direction centers rather than involving whole units. When full units must be involved, the added stress jointness places on the services can be bounded and moderated by predesignating a pool of units on a long-term basis, rather than the current habit of generalizing the requirement and passing it from one unit to another and starting from scratch each time. Moreover, a lot of what passes for jointness is contrived or unnecessarily difficult. Navy ships may occasionally need attack helicopters assigned to them that should come from sea-familiar Marines with the Army backfilling normal Marine Corps aviation. And Navy fighters should not provide close support for the Army when another service can do this specialized task and the Navy backfills the interdiction role, and so forth. And sometimes jointness reveals a deficiency as in the case of putting Army Rangers aboard aircraft carriers. What happened to Marine Special Boat Squadrons?

Joint training is not cost-free; it comes at the expense of other training. This constraint is illustrated in FM 25–100, *Training the Force* (see figure). Readiness and training proficiency of units vary like a sine curve with units "up" only a third of the time. Maintaining readiness in line units under the current personnel system is like being on a treadmill. Hi-tech, like the Army's digitized battlefield, adds more demands. Jointness means something else must give, such as branch proficiency or multi-branch combined arms training. The Marines, however, are a joint land-sea-air team. Their inclusion in things that are joint for jointness sake would mean less combined arms training and less intimacy in providing the jointness it already has with the Navy.

U.S. military units are "continuous life" units because personnel come and go individually. Readiness and training proficiency are accordingly bounded, never reaching the extended high and the short down periods of unit-replacement "born, live, and die" units. In continuous life units, the payoff from joint training for units is short-lived and is lost soon after deployment as personnel leave, and any residual effect can only be retained by assigning the task to the same unit repeatedly. Otherwise the worst of both

The Band of Excellence



Navy Combat Camera (Johnny R. Wilson)

Amphibious assault vehicles during Agile Provider '94.

Combat Camera Imagery (Mickey L. Foster)

Securing soft duck boat on MH–53 helicopter.

personnel systems occurs: the loss of expensively-gained unit skills shortly after joint training, and repetitive train-ups starting from scratch each time as units with totally different officer and NCO cadres lacking joint experience are tasked. In sum, if the future is operating jointly on a continual basis, a new personnel system is needed—one that allows greater training continuity and hence greater training depth and retention of expensively-gained unit skills.

A cheap and comprehensive solution is simply collocation, given that the number of Navy units which must be cross-trained with Army and Air Force units is not large. Familiarity reduces a need for formal exercises. On the Atlantic seaboard companies or battalions from Camp Lejeune and Fort Bragg can periodically switch places as can Army and Marine units on Oahu. Similarly, Marine and Air Force squadrons or half-squadrons from nearby bases can collocate and operate from within the larger wing/group structure of their host service.

Collocation, synthesized with a unit replacement and rotation manning system, can also be used to form large pools of highly trained units for a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF). Thus far NATO CJTFs have been little more than cobbled-together national units serving under a facade of multinational command arrangements. Collocation is especially attractive for CJTFs since units such as squadrons and battalions can be based abroad without normal base operating support costs and, ironically, can be grouped with non-national elements in smaller units than is desirable for multiservice national units. This is because not only must deployments be multinational in scope, but it is desirable that opponents not be able to focus on particular national elements to undermine CJTFs. Furthermore, many interventions like that in Rwanda are small and do not involve intense combat. Nor does collocation preclude reforming national units for combat or unilateral action.

In the past the Armed Forces frequently lacked unity of effort and only reluctantly accepted subordination to officers of other services. Today the problem is interoperability in all its facets and a service tendency in providing defense-wide functions to give short shrift to jointness while assigning a priority to its own components. The authority of the Goldwater-Nichols Act as now institutionalized in ACOM, and the authority of CINCs, resolves this problem through multiservice complementarity: the static meaning of synergism. The danger is that the process is biased by the presumption that multiservice actions are preferable to single-service actions.

The Air Force contends, once incorrectly although perhaps correctly today, that its bombers and fighters can unilaterally smash an enemy and attain victory with few casualties. They therefore shield aviation, special electronic assets, and airlift from joint or combined use. The Air Force has its own priorities, and its fighters have become a semi-strategic light bomber arm with little thought given to their role in furthering land and coalition warfare. Jointly, Air Force tactical aviation can be thought of as a primary element of the combined arms team. Its name itself is a misnomer, for in continental warfare it ought not to be used tactically but operationally to realize synergism.

One difficulty in coming to closure with the practical application of jointness is tied to the meaning of the synergism provided

by combined arms on land and at sea. It is one of those terms given lip service without appreciation of depth of meaning or the sophistication of its implications. The Air Force employs tactical aviation in an applied firepower, attritional mode. The definition of combined arms is vaporous, to wit: "the tactics, techniques, and procedures employed by a force to integrate firepower and mobility to produce a desired effect upon the enemy." [5] Combined arms is not about integration but about orchestration. This is a confusion in military art that goes back for several millennia. There is no conflict between specialization and synergism; indeed specialization on the battlefield generates (dynamic) synergism. Its power is seen episodically when rather small light arms (land and sea) have ripped apart large heavy forces; yet the reverse occurs when smallish heavy forces are provided with a complement of other arms.

Joint Combat Camera Center (Andrew W. McGalliard)

Downed Aircraft Recovery Team, Mogadishu.

The arms of a combined arms team (except counter battery) should ideally not be used arm against arm, as is the tendency, but against another arm to expose its weakness for still another arm to exploit. This implies distinct differentiation among the arms. Indeed much of the history of the operational art is about creating and orchestrating diversity to reduce an enemy to impotence and create conditions for its collapse. In the case of the air-ground team, single-service combined arms expand to multiservice combined arms. In maneuver warfare, landpower makes enemy operational reserves move and become exposed to airpower, while air lowers an enemy's tempo of operations to give one's own ground an advantage in tempo, and therefore an ability to avoid frontal assault and to pin and envelop the enemy. This conceptual point was missed entirely in Desert Storm as air forces were used strategically and tactically but not operationally in the maneuver style. Inadequate Iraqi air defense meant allied ground forces could have swept quickly and bloodlessly around and well away from overextended Iraqi forces within Kuwait to the Euphrates and Tigris in a strategic turning movement reminiscent of Napoleon's Ulm campaign. Any attempt to interfere with this movement would have required Republican Guard units without air defenses moving 100 kilometers across open desert before making contact.

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The confusion associated with integrating combined arms has run over into jointness. The proper term here is "orchestrating." The notion of integrating the disparate ways in which the military thinks about employing force leads to Bernard Trainor's admonition. Orchestrating disparate ways the services think about employing force is an entirely different matter. Similarly, jointness should be valued for its synergism, however large or small the force.

Deriding jointness was once a sign of service parochialism. In the wake of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, however, jointness has become an instrument for transcending parochialism. But its utility certainly includes deflecting force slashing under a realignment of roles and missions by displaying multiservice complementarity and enabling assistance, and through the participation of all services in contingencies so that redundancies do not appear. When actions like Grenada and Panama occur each service participates. This may justify budgets, but it is perverse. The Army and Air Force were not needed in Grenada, and the Navy and Marines were not needed in Panama. Such actions—unless units are permanently assigned for quick reaction missions—inherently lead to a lack of familiarity with joint operations. They add a command layer and make coordination more complex than in a Navy-Marine operational maneuver from the sea, and thus less agile and less suitable for mounting fast-breaking responses like a *coup de main*, a capability increasingly important to escape today's all-pervasive firepower.

Surprise (often gained from smallness), tempo, and (battle) synergism are force multipliers and can often accomplish what size and firepower cannot. Accordingly, there

should be a greater division of labor and specialization among services, and jointness in this type of operation should often take the form of lead services rather than formalized joint commands. Some contingencies are more appropriate for the Army-Air Force with their special forces. Others are more suited for the Navy-Marine team. There is a natural division of labor between the two and they generally need not and should not be blended except for large deployments such as Desert Storm where both were needed and intimate jointness was not a requirement anyway.

The Limits of Realignment

The purpose of realigning roles and missions is to achieve savings by consolidating support establishments and eliminating redundant field forces. Few oppose consolidating support services; but while more can be done, there are limits. Some support functions observe economies of scale, and consolidation may lead to diseconomies, a prevalent phenomenon in the military.

Medical support is a case in point. The services share training facilities, dispensaries, and hospitals. But unifying medical support would be dysfunctional. At best it would mean another level of headquarters; at worst it would lead to standardized medical field services (that is, the small units assigned to ships and divisions which account for half of all medical personnel) where each meets a different need and functions in a different environment. Medical consolidation has three negatives: more overhead, loss of service identity, and none of the savings which normally derive from tailoring services to meet specific needs. Nonetheless significant cost savings can be made in medical support by re-engineering dental and labor-intensive field services—an approach outside the framework of a realignment of roles and missions.

F–16s being launched from Aviano Air Base.

Combat Camera Imagery (Steve Thurow)

The thrust of a realignment, however, is in sorting out combat forces for the services. The payoffs are huge. Contrary to widespread belief, however, a review is not an appropriate vehicle for appraising the major forces. Its own economic logic is flawed, for it is based on attrition style warfare when the services are grappling for an updated maneuver style, and it is unable to handle the political-military premises underlying the structure and use of forces. This reduces the process to appraising minor redundancies like Navy SEALs patrolling deserts with fast attack dune buggies and savings from the Army providing tank and reinforcing artillery support to the Marines in lieu of their own organic components.

The logic of realignment is centered on scale economies, yet when field forces are evaluated Adam Smith's division of labor and specialization on which they are based is rejected. The focus is on efficiency and quantifiable measures like firepower scores that are measures of effectiveness. The result is forces of generalized homogeneity. That is suitable for linear, attrition style warfare in which forces are deployed in the attack and defense like a chain across the front. In this model of war, units are appropriately homogeneous because the front is no stronger than its weakest unit. For linear tactics, there is no demand for diversity nor for tempo—only quick response fires. By contrast differentiation and tempo are the very basis of non-linear maneuver warfare.

The methodology of a realignment of roles and missions breaks down when premises dictate diverse forces for diverse purposes rather than all-purpose forces. This is apparent in areas that many see as budgetary show-stoppers: bombers versus carriers and consolidation of air forces and infantry—huge dollar issues striking at the heart of force sizing.

The most prominent of them is the bomber versus carrier fray. The Air Force advances the compelling case that stealth, precision weapons, and quick response bomb

damage assessment by satellite offer heretofore unobtainable capabilities.[6] The Navy argues equally compellingly that regional conflicts mandate carriers like never before. These arguments proceed from differences in national strategy. If that strategy requires destroying opponents, bombers are clearly the answer, though naval forces are not totally eliminated from the equation due to complementarity and their enabling strategic bombing (and other operations).[7] But if strategy is more complex and involves Operations Other Than War (OOTW), then equally clearly bombers lose and carrier task forces gain value. This is an old argument that a realignment of roles and missions will not resolve.

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U.S. Navy (Charles Alley)

***USS Monsoon*, the latest class of coastal patrol ship.**

A second saving allegedly lies in consolidating tactical air forces. In practice this means reducing the four air forces to three with Marine helicopters going to the Army and Marine fighters split between the Air Force and Navy. This destroys the Marine Corps and may well be the agenda some hide. Air Force, Navy, and Marine fighters may utilize much the same equipment, but their employment and coordination requirements differ vastly. Coloring Marine aviation blue and regrading its *raison d'être* as green is one way to alter perceptions and reduce tactical air forces to three though nothing substantively changes. Logistical support is already hued blue. Its danger lies in blue's increased leverage over green and naval aviation's insensitivity toward the specialization and command arrangements that make Marine aviation effective.

The issues in tactical aviation (which consumes half the conventional force defense budget) are sizing and internal economies. The realignment of roles and missions is deceptive in that it has little to say about either and amounts to running a rabbit across the fox's trail. Even if there were but one tactical air force, there would still need to be four branches reflecting the peculiar needs of each service—hence the issue of sizing remains. The alternative is more expensive all-purpose wings moderately effective in all environments. And even this does not address a key sizing and budgetary question: the air-to-surface tradeoff. Nor are internal economies insured when the focus is on consolidating existing institutions rather than how they were organized in the first instance. U.S. military aviation is labor intensive and cost-ineffective relative to other top air forces, the Swedes and Israelis in particular.

There is nothing inherently wrong with four tactical air forces per se, as long as each is different and costs are controlled. The first condition is met; the second is not and consolidation likely worsens it. Naval aviation is sea-oriented and force projection keeps it from entangling with land-based aviation. Air Force tactical aviation should be "operational," while Marine aviation is more "island" oriented and therefore appropriately "tactical." Furthermore, Marine aviation is leaner by a factor of two than the Air Force's even though Marine air is expeditionary and operates from inherently inefficient, roughly hewn air strips. Consolidation in this case thus leads to three negatives: higher costs, lower effectiveness, and less intimacy in joint operations.

The third large saving involves eliminating apparent duplication in non-mechanized infantry of which the Army has four and the Marines three divisions. Three of the Army's are specialized airborne, helicopter assault, and mountain/cold weather. Only one is "all-purpose" and it is tied to Korea. The three Marine divisions are amphibious-oriented but more generalized than the Army's. They are also larger, hence more vulnerable on both counts to a realignment in roles and missions.

Another perspective should be considered. The Army is attuned to large-scale warfighting and the Marines traditionally show the flag and keep the peace among lesser entities. Both are needed. Yet it is difficult to maintain both functions within the same military service. It is too much to ask the Army and Air Force to orient themselves both to hi-tech warfare against similar militaries and to peace support missions where their weaponry must be muzzled and will actually inhibit their agility and ability to field "cops on the beat." Vastly different skills are needed and one will always wither under the other. The British Army is a case in point. Its colonial performance was nearly brilliant; but its performance on the European continent has been spotty.

The implication is that rather than homogenizing Army and Marine infantry and reducing a division, realignment could save money by stressing their distinctiveness. Marine infantry should be oriented toward raiding and quick interventions mounted from the sea, light armor constabulary duty, and peace support. Such forces need to be politically attuned, equipped, and trained for these missions. Money is saved because the forces are light and do not need the full array of arms and services. Present practice is to use regular formations for these missions even though they are too encumbered to perform well and they thus bloat the size and cost of commitment.

American combat forces are not large by international standards and should not be shrunk further. Nonetheless, they are too expensive, and while their readiness and training proficiency is high, those standards were set for a conscript military, not for a long service military. Jointness and roles and missions are not the solvent. But maneuver theory is in all its ramifications. Beyond operational and equipping implications the power of maneuver warfare lies in recasting the internal procedures by which the military operates: manning, training, and mobilizing. These were last cast half a century ago and are now entirely dated and no longer in harmony with new service operational concepts of maneuver warfare and requirements for supporting peace operations. JFQ

NOTES

[1] For a comparative analysis, see Steven L. Canby and Edward N. Luttwak, *A Systematic Review of "Commando" (Special) Operations (1939–1980)* (Washington: C&L Associates, 1982).

[2] Carl E. Mundy, Jr., "Thunder and Lightning: Joint Littoral Warfare," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 4 (Spring 1994), p. 50.

[3] Bernard E. Trainor, "Jointness, Service Culture, and the Gulf War," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 3 (Winter 1993–94), p. 74.

[4] Ibid.

[5] U.S. Marine Corps, FMFM 6–30, *Employment of the Light Armored Infantry Battalion*, August 1992, p. C–3. This publication raises points relative to jointness, joint doctrine, and roles and missions. These units are new, recently renamed light armored reconnaissance battalions, and only four exist. FMFM 6–30, a highly abridged copy of an Army manual, and related publications are an unnecessary expense and, worse, cause friction when Army heavies support Marine units. The relevant distinctions should be published in an appendix to the Army manual. FMFM 6–30 simply provides institutional distance. It would be undesirable to restrict the Marine Corps from issuing manuals in areas such as armor and artillery (of which it has little) under the rubric of jointness or roles and missions. This practice might frustrate jointness by suggesting to one service that joint doctrine starts with another service, rather than at the Joint Warfighting Center.

[6] See Buster C. Glossen, "The Impact of Precision Weapons on Air Combat Operations," *Airpower Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Summer 1993), and Edward N. Luttwak, *The Utility of Strategic Airpower*, vol. 1, *Strategic Airpower in the New Geo-Economic Era* (Washington: C&L Associates, September 1992).

[7] See, for example, William A. Owens, "Living Jointness," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 3 (Winter 1993–94), pp. 12–14.